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Your
United States
Department of Agriculture

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How it serves people on the FARM, and in the COMMUNITY, NATION, AND WORLD

United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Communication
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Your United States Department of Agriculture

Its Broad Responsibilities

Your U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) serves all of us every day. It works to improve farm income, to assure consumers of an adequate food supply at reasonable prices, and to expand overseas markets for U.S. farm products.

The Department works to safeguard the wholesomeness of our food supply through continuous inspection of food processing plants, and assures food quality through voluntary food grading services.

Through nutrition education, USDA helps consumers choose nourishing foods and get the most for their food dollars. It also helps millions of Americans enjoy better diets through food assistance programs.

The Department's widespread research is another significant contribution to our standard of living. The research covers food and nutrition, animal disease and pest control, crop production, marketing and the use of agricultural products, food safety, and environmental quality. Directly or indirectly, the findings from such research benefit all Americans.

USDA protects the environment by helping farmers and other rural landowners conserve energy, soil, water, and forest resources, and assists developing countries in improving their food production. USDA programs in the fields of rural development, housing assistance, and conservation are key elements in carrying out national growth policies.

How It Started

USDA was created in 1862 by an Act passed by Congress and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. A little more than 25 years after its establishment, USDA became the eighth executive department to achieve Cabinet rank. In the early days, the Department served a population engaged predominantly in agriculture as a livelihood. A farmer in Lincoln's time produced only enough farm products to supply himself and three or four others.

Today's Department serves a Nation in which less than 5 percent of the population lives on farms—a Nation in which each agricultural worker provides food and fiber for himself and 56 others.

Relationship to Land-Grant Colleges

In 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Act, establishing the system of "land-grant" colleges in the Nation. This Act donated 11 million acres of public lands to the States and territories to provide colleges to support the agricultural and mechanical arts. Currently, there are 71 land-grant colleges and universities in the 50 States, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia.

In 1887, Congress authorized an agricultural experiment station in each State and territory.

In 1914, it established the Cooperative Extension Service for each State to spread the findings of agricultural and home economics research to farmers and the general public.

These acts were followed by others to strengthen college teaching, experimentation, and Extension activities of the States.

The land-grant colleges and experiment stations, in cooperation with the Department, have made American agriculture the most productive in the world, and the consumer's food supply the least expensive in terms of disposable income.

ACTIVITIES OF USDA

Research

USDA works closely on research with State experiment stations, State Departments of Agriculture, schools of forestry, farmer cooperatives, and other public and private agencies. It administers Federal grant funds voted by Congress for research in State facilities.

The *Agricultural Research Service (ARS)* carries out research on crops, livestock, soil and water conservation, energy conservation, agricultural engineering, control of insects and other pests, human nutrition, and consumer and food economics. ARS also develops new and expanded uses for farm commodities. It conducts and administers a research program using the physical and biological sciences to

solve problems of market quality, transportation, and facilities.

The *Cooperative State Research Service* (CSRS) administers (under the Hatch Act of 1955 and the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Act of 1962) Federal grant payments for research at the agricultural experiment stations and eligible schools of forestry. CSRS also assists State experiment stations, land-grant colleges, and USDA agencies in planning and coordinating scientific research programs.

The *Economic Research Service* (ERS) does research in general economic and statistical analysis, marketing economics, farm and resource economics, and foreign economic analysis.

The *Farmer Cooperative Service* (FCS) conducts economic research and provides technical assistance to help farmers market their products and purchase supplies through cooperatives. It helps other rural people wanting to use cooperatives to obtain business services or to improve their income and standard of living.

FCS reaches farmers and other rural people through informational and educational materials and through personal contact. In carrying out its programs and activities, FCS cooperates with land-grant universities, State Extension offices, county agents, and cooperatives and their State and national organizations.

The *Forest Service* (FS), under authority of the McSweeney-McNary Forestry Research Act, carries on forestry research through eight regional forest and range experiment stations, the Forest Products Laboratory, and the Institute of Tropical Forestry.

This research enables foresters to improve the resource management and utilization of the National Forest System and other publicly administered lands as well as privately owned forest lands, including small woodland properties. Research covers problems in five fields: timber, watersheds, forage, wildlife habitat, and recreation. Basic research deals with protection of these resources from fire, insects, diseases, and other natural destructive agents. Still other research projects cover: application of genetics, fertilization, and other techniques to increase forest growth; timber harvest engineering

leading to improved methods of tree removal and road construction; better forest products utilization; forest economics and forest product marketing; and national, regional, and State timber resource inventories. These inventories, made periodically, determine acreage of forest lands and volumes and quality of timber; trends in growth and harvest; and projections of future supply, demand, and use.

Education

The *Extension Service* (ES) is the educational arm of the Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges and universities. Federal, State, and local governments share in the financial support of the system and in developing the program. Cooperative Extension is administered by the land-grant university through an Extension director in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam.

Today, Extension programs are available in nearly all the 3,150 counties of the Nation. Extension and other USDA programs help people apply new research findings and technological developments to the everyday problems of living. The major areas included in the educational efforts are efficient production and marketing of agricultural products; improved family living, including better nutrition; 4-H youth development; and community and rural development.

The Extension method is to transfer research findings and technological information from the laboratory and field plots of the university to farms and rural and urban homes through State specialists and county Extension agents and volunteer workers.

The *National Agricultural Library* (NAL), Beltsville, Maryland (intersection of I-495 and U.S. 1 at Exit 27 North), contains 1.5 million volumes on agriculture, biology, chemistry, nutrition, horticulture, and other subjects supporting agriculture. Probably the most extensive agricultural collection in existence, the Library collects publications from all over the world; supports the various programs of USDA and State agricultural agencies; extends

services to other libraries and institutions, and to the public; and provides, at cost, microfilm and photocopy of material in the collection. Information contained in the Library's collection is distributed through loans, photocopies, and reference services. Bibliographic data is stored in the CAIN (CAatalog-INdexing) System. Outputs from this system include three monthly publications: *Bibliography of Agriculture*, the *National Agricultural Library Catalog*, and *FNIC (Food and Nutrition Information Center) Catalog*, with supplements issued as needed. All data bases on the system are now referred to as AGRICOLA which is accessible through several commercial on-line services.

Information

Each USDA agency provides information about its work for farmers, industry, and consumers. The *Office of Communication* (COMM) plans, develops, and executes Departmentwide information programs and coordinates activities of internal agencies for:

Publications, both technical and popular, which present the results of research and information about USDA regulatory and service programs.

Current information, which includes press, radio, and television materials and special reports.

Visuals, including exhibits, photographs, graphics, and motion pictures.

COMM also serves as liaison for information requested by Congress and other branches of government—as well as the general public—on farm-and consumer-related programs. COMM additionally coordinates publication of Yearbooks of Agriculture with researchers and other agricultural specialists.

Marketing Services

The *Agricultural Marketing Service* (AMS) helps the private marketing system move food and other farm products from producer to consumer quickly and efficiently, with fairness to all.

AMS establishes standards for grades indicating the quality of cotton, tobacco, spirits of turpentine and rosin, and feeder cattle and pigs. It also provides grading services for all of the above except for the feeder animals.

AMS collects market news daily on various kinds and qualities of agricultural products, including their prices and movement in major markets. It helps to strengthen farm income and expand the market for farm products through programs to encourage consumption of foods in temporary overabundance.

AMS helps farmers get equitable rates and services for transportation of their products by presenting information to bodies such as the Interstate Commerce Commission. It also promotes fair play in marketing through administration of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, the U.S. Warehouse Act, the Federal Seed Act, the Plant Variety Protection Act, and the Agricultural Fair Practices Act.

Through marketing agreements and orders, AMS puts a floor under prices received by farmers for milk, and helps regulate the volume or quality of fruits and vegetables going to market. The agency also assists producers in promulgating commodity research and promotion programs authorized by Congress, and then monitors activities of the boards appointed to administer the programs.

Many AMS programs are carried out in cooperation with State agencies. Consumers indirectly benefit from many AMS programs, since they are designed to assure adequate, dependable supplies of food and other farm products.

The *Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service* (APHIS) helps to safeguard the health and quality of the Nation's animals and plants.

Protection of our farm products begins at the ports of entry, where APHIS maintains close surveillance of all animal and plant imports, cargoes, and passengers' baggage to prevent the entry of anything that might harbor a foreign pest or disease of animals and plants.

APHIS cooperates with the States and the agricultural industry to eradicate and control animal disease of national importance. In addition to the protection this provides to the Nation's farmers, it helps to guard all Americans from those diseases which can be transmitted from animals to man.

The agency also cooperates with the States and industry to control or eradicate native or alien pests and diseases of plants which pose an interstate menace. Close surveillance is maintained nationwide of pest infestations to identify potential problems and organize effective control programs.

Typical of these cooperative activities are the current campaigns to control the gypsy moth, which is capable of defoliating shade trees and entire forests; the screwworm, a flesh-eating menace of livestock, wildlife, and all other warm-blooded animals; and the cereal leaf beetle, which can cause severe damage to small grains.

APHIS also licenses the manufacture and marketing of veterinary biologics to ensure their purity and effectiveness. In its role as a regulatory agency, it enforces the laws requiring humane treatment of dogs, cats, and other small animals used for research; zoo animals and animals used in exhibitions; and horses.

The *Federal Grain Inspection Service* (FGIS) establishes official U.S. standards for grain and administers a nationwide system of official grain inspection to certify the grade. FGIS also regulates the weighing of all grain entering or leaving any export facility in the United States. All substantial exporters of U.S. grain are required to register with FGIS and provide agency officials with information about company ownership, management, control, and locations.

The U.S. Grain Standards Act of 1976, under which FGIS was established, requires that all U.S. grain destined for export, with some exceptions, undergo inspection as it is loaded aboard ship. Export grain is inspected by FGIS or by State Departments of Agriculture under authority by FGIS. Domestic grain marketed at inland locations is inspected under FGIS supervision by State Departments of Agriculture and private firms.

The *Packers and Stockyards Administration* (P&SA) administers the Packers and Stockyards Act, and helps to maintain free and open competition in the marketing of the Nation's livestock, poultry, and meat production.

The P&S Act prohibits unfair, deceptive, discriminatory, and monopolistic marketing practices which would deprive the farmer of a fair price for his product, deprive the marketer

of a reasonable profit for his services, and would unduly affect consumer prices for meat and poultry.

Food and Consumer Services

The *Food Safety and Quality Service* (FSQS) helps assure the wholesomeness of meat, poultry, eggs, and egg products through its inspection programs. It facilitates trade in food products and helps consumers choose the quality of product they wish through its grading services. FSQS was established in March 1977 through a consolidation of services previously conducted under AMS and APHIS.

The agency administers the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act, which provide for uniform Federal-State inspection of all meat and poultry products. Inspection regulations require advance approval of the construction and equipment of plants operating in interstate commerce; inspection of animals and birds before, during, and after slaughter; continuous inspection of all processing operations; and advance approval of labels for meat and poultry products.

The inspection program includes surveillance to guard against harmful bacteria and residues in meat and poultry products and monitoring inspection in foreign plants handling meat and poultry for export to the United States.

Under the Inspection Acts, the agency assists State inspection programs in plants dealing in intrastate trade, or assumes inspection in States where the programs are not equal to Federal inspection.

FSQS also establishes standards of identity or content for meat and poultry products.

Wholesomeness of egg products is safeguarded through continuous inspection in plants processing liquid, frozen, or dried egg products. In addition, FSQS monitors egg handlers and hatcheries to insure proper disposal of eggs that might contain harmful bacteria.

The agency provides grading services and establishes U.S. grade standards for meat, poultry, eggs, dairy products, and fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables. Grading services are available on request and for a fee

and are often provided in cooperation with State Departments of Agriculture. In a related service, FSQS checks food purchases to make sure that they meet the contract specifications agreed to by individual firms.

The agency also purchases food for distribution through programs of the Food and Nutrition Service.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers a number of Federal-State programs to provide food assistance to people who need help. The agency cooperates with State and local welfare agencies in administering the Food Stamp Program which enables low-income families to purchase a greater variety of foods to improve their diets. Several Child Nutrition Programs help provide food to children in public and nonprofit private schools, family day care centers, and child care institutions. During extended vacation periods, this help is available through recreation programs and residential summer camps serving children from low-income areas. The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides specified nutritious food supplements to pregnant and nursing women, as well as children up to 5 years old who are found to be "at nutritional risk" because of poor diet or low income. The Food Distribution Program donates foods to various food program outlets—schools, charitable institutions, nutrition programs for the elderly, summer camps, disaster relief agencies, and needy family programs on some Indian reservations.

Trade and Aid

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is responsible for expanding foreign markets for U.S. agricultural products, analyzing and reporting developments in world agricultural production and trade, and representing the interests of U.S. agriculture in trade negotiations and at international forums related to food and agriculture. FAS maintains attachés in more than 60 countries to provide a constant flow of agricultural information from around the world.

The Office of the General Sales Manager (OGSM) administers Public Law 480 (Food for Peace) which deals with concessional credit of agricultural commodities and food donations to friendly foreign countries. OGSM also adminis-

ters the Commodity Credit Corporation export sales program, which is based upon short-term credit arrangements.

Additionally, OGSM is responsible for reporting sales and shipments of U.S. farm products by American exporters.

Economics

The *Economic Research Service* (ERS) analyzes factors affecting farm production and their relationship to the environment, prices and income, and the outlook for various commodities. It studies production efficiency; marketing costs and potential new markets; rural development and natural resources; agricultural trade, production, and Government policies as they affect agriculture.

The *Statistical Reporting Service* (SRS) gathers and publishes statistics about the Nation's crops, livestock, poultry, dairy products, prices, labor, and related agricultural items. Additional local information about acreage, yields, production, and weather is issued by the agency's 44 field offices serving the 50 States. The continuing series of reports help maintain an orderly production and distribution of agricultural goods.

The *Farmer Cooperative Service* (FCS) compiles national statistics on farmer cooperatives and identifies business trends. It studies the cooperative business structure, analyzes new ventures, and evaluates business efficiency.

Soil, Water, and Forest Conservation

The *Soil Conservation Service* (SCS) develops and carries out a national conservation program through more than 2,950 local conservation districts with 2.3 million cooperating landowners and operators. The Service provides onsite technical assistance to landowners and operators in inventorying and assessing their soil, water, and plant resources and in planning and applying land-use and conservation treatments.

The agency also provides leadership for watershed projects, the Great Plains conservation program, resource conservation and development projects, recreation enterprises, investigations of river basins, and the National Inventory of Soil and Water Conservation Needs.

In addition, SCS administers the Federal part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey, and coordinates snow surveys to help in forecasting water supplies in the Western States. SCS also gives technical help in support of the national agricultural conservation program.

In recent years, the services of SCS specialists have been used more and more by State, county, and local governments; planning and zoning agencies; and other institutions and organizations in rapidly developing areas to insure proper land and water use and management. These services take the form of assistance to nonfarm groups in such activities as the provision of municipal and industrial water supplies, highway construction, housing developments, recreation facilities, sanitary landfills, school site developments, and surface mine reclamation.

The Forest Service (FS) is dedicated to the principles of multiple-use management, for sustained yields, of the Nation's renewable forest resources. It provides services to a growing Nation through management of 187 million acres of the National Forest System; cooperation with State foresters, private forest owners, wood processors, and private and public agencies; and nationwide forestry research that directly or indirectly supports all management and cooperative efforts.

Forest Service programs are concerned with a variety of activities. They include timber production, outdoor recreation, habitat for fish and wildlife, watershed protection, and livestock grazing. FS programs help prevent and suppress wildfires. They are concerned with wilderness management, forest engineering, land management planning, mining and land reclamation and reforestation, the marketing and utilization of forest products, resource surveys, urban forestry, and pollution. In addition, FS is responsible for the control of forest insects

and diseases, development of human resources through programs such as the Youth Conservation Corps, and for providing incentives (such as production and distribution of seedling planting stock) that stimulate the proper management of State, county, municipal, and community forests.

Farm Programs

The *Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service* (ASCS) administers:

—Programs to maintain production of wheat, feed grains, and other crops at a level sufficient to satisfy market demand and to meet food and feed assistance commitments through purchases. ASCS also provides loan and price support payments to program participants.

—The cotton program to assure adequate but not excessive supplies through purchases, and loan and price support payments.

—Acreage allotments and marketing quotas, when applicable under law, for certain major crops to help keep supplies in line with demand.

—Programs for various other commodities specified by law, and the management of commodity inventories.

—The National Wool Act (including provisions concerning mohair).

—The Dairy Program.

—Programs to help obtain adequate farm and commercial storage and drying equipment for farm products.

—Cost sharing programs with farmers to install needed soil, water, woodland, and wildlife conserving practices and pollution prevention and abatement practices of enduring communitywide benefit under the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP); cost sharing with private landowners to plant trees and improve timber stands under the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP); payments to landowners along important migratory waterfowl flyways to preserve, restore, and improve nesting and breeding areas.

—Programs to assist farmers during natural disasters and other emergencies.

ASCS is assigned specific emergency preparedness responsibilities, and carries out departmentwide defense coordinating activities, including the servicing of USDA State and county emergency boards. Through its State and

county offices, ASCS conducts monitoring activities during periods of anticipated shortages of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and other key farm production items in order to prevent hardships.

ASCS also assists the Food and Nutrition Service in the distribution of commodities through domestic channels, and cooperates with the Foreign Agricultural Service in making Government-held food stocks available for foreign assistance programs.

The *Commodity Credit Corporation* (CCC) with its \$14.5 billion borrowing authority finances the farm programs, domestic and export surplus commodity disposal, foreign assistance, storage activities, and related programs and operations of the Department, utilizing ASCS personnel.

The *Federal Crop Insurance Corporation* (FCIC) provides farmers with self-help all-risk insurance that repays crop production costs when crops have been lost because of bad weather, insects, disease, and other unavoidable natural causes. This keeps the rural economy going in those years when drought or another natural disaster cuts crop yields and leaves farmers with a short crop or no crop to sell. FCIC protection is available in more than one-third of the Nation's farm counties. As farming becomes more of a credit operation, Federal Crop Insurance policies are becoming increasingly important as collateral for crop production loans.

Rural Development

Rural development is a cooperative process in which public agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens work together to improve community facilities and services and economic opportunities for people living in the towns and farming communities outside metropolitan America.

To accomplish this, the Department's program centers on: *people building* (providing services and facilities needed to stimulate human development), *community facilities* (combining city conveniences with the advantages of country living), *environmental improvement* (protecting and improving our natural assets), and *economic development* (increasing farm and business investment to create jobs).

Under the Rural Development Act of 1972, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has responsibility for coordinating a nationwide rural development program utilizing services and resources of other Federal departments and agencies in cooperation with States and localities.

The Assistant Secretary for Rural Development of the Department is in charge of key programs contributing to rural development and also serves as chairman of the National Rural Development Committee. This group establishes policies, sets priorities, and coordinates programs of the Department which contribute to the development of rural areas.

The Department of Agriculture's role in a national rural development program is of critical importance. The Department is the central point for coordination and leadership in the Federal Government of activities benefiting rural communities. The Department also administers a wide variety of financial, technical, and educational services that directly assist State and local governments and citizens to develop community goals. These include:

Program coordination and leadership—*Rural Development Service*.

Supervised credit for farming, conservation, home construction, public works, and business and industrial development—*Farmers Home Administration*.

Financial and technical assistance for public and cooperative electric and telephone facilities—*Rural Electrification Administration*.

Research at the State and regional level on technical, economic, and social aspects of rural community improvement and project development—*Cooperative State Research Service* in cooperation with State experiment stations.

Educational programs to inform local officials and citizens of methods to improve their communities and solve basic problems related to community growth and environmental protection—*Extension Service*.

Assistance to the States in promoting wise conservation and development of State, local, and private forestry resources which are critically important in the development of some rural areas; and management of the national forest lands for maximum benefit to all the people, with particular concern for the impact of national forest activities on the rural communities where they are located—*Forest Service*.

Financial, technical, and administrative assistance in the conservation and development of soil, water, and other natural resources in rural areas. This includes technical assistance in land-use planning and areawide resource conservation and development programs. It also includes financial assistance for a variety of basic measures to improve soil and water conservation and development—*Soil Conservation Service*.

Cost-sharing assistance to agricultural producers through annual and long-term agreements for soil and water resource conservation, and prevention or abatement of agriculture-related pollution—*Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service*.

Technical assistance to cooperative enterprises processing and marketing farm products and to other cooperatively owned, rural-based industries—*Farmer Cooperative Service*.

Research on factors affecting rural development and natural resources, findings of which are used widely by Federal, State, and local officials engaged in rural development programs—*Economic Research Service*.

Many other agencies of the Department also contribute to various aspects of the program in such fields as market development and food distribution to improve the diets of low-income rural people and others.

In each State there is a rural development committee composed of the Department's cooperating State agencies. In many States volunteer citizen groups are represented. These committees develop joint programs and activities within the State to use all appropriate Federal and State resources in rural development.

Credit

The *Farmers Home Administration* (FmHA) provides vital financial assistance to rural America through multibillion-dollar loan and grant programs. The agency approaches rural development through five major avenues: (1) encouraging and supporting family farm ownership and operation to provide an economic and social base for rural society; (2) providing modest, but adequate modern individual homes and rental apartments; (3) installing needed community facilities, such as water and waste disposal systems, firefighting facilities, community centers, streets, health services, and other needed amenities; (4) providing economic support to farmers affected by disaster; and (5) fostering economic development with loans for business and industrial enterprises.

More than 26 million rural people in 46 States benefit from electric and telephone services provided by systems financed through loans from the *Rural Electrification Administration*, the *Rural Telephone Bank*, and other lenders. REA's guarantee loan program makes available funds from non-REA sources to finance large-scale electric and telephone projects. These utility services are essential to farm productivity, rural business establishments, and are vital in furthering rural area development.

Emergency Programs

USDA defense and major natural disaster programs are coordinated through USDA State and county emergency boards as directed by an assistant to the Secretary. Those administering programs to feed people and to help farmers affected by floods, drought, and other natural disasters would use this experience to meet USDA responsibilities in the event of nuclear war. In the national defense program, USDA is responsible for food from the farm through the wholesale level, fire control in rural areas, and biological and chemical warfare defense for animals and crops.

HOW USDA IS ORGANIZED

SECRETARY

Deputy Secretary

Staff Assistants

Judicial Officer

Office of Communication

Office of Congressional and Public Affairs

Office of the General Counsel

Office of Inspector General

Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Departmental Administration

Assistant Secretary for Administration

Board of Contract Appeals

Office of Administrative Law Judges

Office of Automated Data Systems

Office of Equal Opportunity

Office of Finance

Office of Operations

Office of Personnel

Economics, Policy Analysis and Budget

Director

Staff Economist

Economic Management Support Center

Economic Research Service

Farmer Cooperative Service

Office of Budget, Planning and Evaluation

Statistical Reporting Service

World Food and Agricultural Outlook and
Situation Board

International Affairs and Commodity Programs

Assistant Secretary

Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation
Service

Commodity Credit Corporation

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation

Foreign Agricultural Service

Office of the General Sales Manager

Marketing Services
Assistant Secretary
Agricultural Marketing Service
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Federal Grain Inspection Service
Packers and Stockyards Administration

Rural Development
Assistant Secretary
Farmers Home Administration
Rural Development Service
Rural Electrification Administration
Rural Telephone Bank

Conservation, Research and Education
Assistant Secretary
Agricultural Research Service
Cooperative State Research Service
Extension Service
Forest Service
National Agricultural Library
Soil Conservation Service

Food and Consumer Services
Assistant Secretary
Food and Nutrition Service
Food Safety and Quality Service

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